RSRR 123 Road User Safety and Disadvantage – Appendix 4: Partnership Working

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1 Partnership analysis

1.1 Introduction

The project involved detailed analysis of examples of different partnership working arrangements in two case study areas to understand how they are set up and how they work in practice. The aim was:

- to examine how different partnership arrangements may influence road safety in disadvantaged communities and areas;
- to explore how effective different arrangements are in utilising members' skills and developing strategies and interventions; and
- to identify good practice in joint working for delivering road safety improvements.

In addition, the partnership investigation aimed to understand the potential effects of incorporating road safety issues and targets into wider partnership policy agenda, and to explore what difference this may make to service delivery.

1.2 Method

Two examples of partnership working were selected for detailed investigation. The first was an example of a wider forum set up by the local authority road safety department to engage with local politicians, other departments within the council, other agencies and the wider community. The second was a delivery group established within the framework of a statutory Crime and Disorder Partnership. These two cases provided contrasting examples of joint working arrangements.

A mixed methods approach was applied, involving:
- desk research to establish partnership governance arrangements;
- content analysis of meeting agenda and minutes;
- interviews with partnership members;
- interviews with corporate officials; and
- social network analysis (SNA).

The SNA was carried out by sending questionnaires to members of both the partnerships. The questionnaires asked for information about the respondent (e.g. which agency they represented, whether they had a specific role in the group and how long they had been a representative); about their relationships to other members of the group (e.g. they were asked to name up to five group members who were the most important for the respondents' road safety duties and how often they contacted them); they also listed up to three people who were not members of the group, but who they contacted regularly about road safety matters.

Owing to data protection issues, these questionnaires were sent to the leaders of the two group and the leaders distributed them to the group members, who were asked to return them to the research team by e-mail. Non-response was followed up on several occasions in both partnerships. The response rates in both groups were around 50%.[1]

The information from the questionnaires was processed to produce visual representations of the relationship information collected using Pajek.[2]

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[1] In the forum, 6 out of 12 questionnaires were returned; in the task group, 6 out of 10 were returned
[2] Pajek is an SNA programme developed by Vladimir Batagelj and Andrej Mrvar.

1.3 Example 1: stakeholder forum

The first partnership arrangement examined was a forum that has been in place for some seven years. It was initially established in response to the Government's strategy on road safety (Department for Transport, 2007) and the specific reference therein, to the importance of partnership working as well as the establishment of casualty reduction targets. This meeting replaced an existing council road safety sub-committee with co-opted members. It aimed to provide a mechanism for council members, members of the public, road safety, other council departments, and representatives from voluntary and statutory organisations to debate and advise on road safety strategies.

1.3.1 Strategic context

Road safety issues are not established within higher level strategy of partner agencies as recognised in the Sustainable Community Strategy or the Local Area Agreement in this area. The broad and long-term issues identified in the strategy were determined through a process of evidence-based analysis and residents' consultation and, to some extent, by who is represented on the strategic level partnership and the issues that they support and champion. The Strategy identified a general residents' outcome associated with increasing life expectancy and improving health. It is the case that an objective associated with reducing death and injury from road traffic accidents can readily sit within this broad framework, but, in this area, road safety was not specifically identified as a priority at this higher strategic level. Individual operational plans are seen as part of a hierarchy which will typically comply with the broad aims set in the Community Strategy and this is where road safety plans are identified.

The absence of any specific mention of road safety outcomes is mirrored in the Local Area Agreement which represents a mechanism for monitoring delivery. Road safety does not tend to have a high profile outside the immediate local authority service delivery area where it sits. Road traffic casualty reduction targets are not included in the National Indicator (NI) set within the Local Area Agreement. The area was established around 12 evidence-based priorities, and selected the NIs that most closely matched these priorities, with road traffic casualty reduction targets not among them.

1.3.2 Partnership structure and objectives

The original terms of reference of the stakeholder forum identified a very general overall objective: 'to promote road safety and reduce road casualties and risk of accidents'. It was envisaged that the forum contributes to this by:

- promoting joint working and initiatives such as health, education and road safety;
- providing a voice for local interest groups and ensuring equality in the decision-making process;
- providing a platform to develop and promote road safety initiatives across the city; and
- advising on road safety policy and projects including the development of the Road Safety Plan.

Forum membership is wide-ranging and includes road safety department engineers and education, publicity and training (EPT) officers, neighbourhood services, education, transport interest groups (cyclists, hauliers) and the police. Approximately 20 to 30 people attend the meeting and they meet around twice a year. The SNA (see Figure 1.1) shows that this network is very loose and disconnected. Questionnaires were sent to 12 people by the forum leader, and a total of 15 individuals were recognised as forum members. This was either through receiving a questionnaire, or through recognition as a forum member by someone who had received a questionnaire. Possibly this represents a core group who attend regularly, and the meeting attendees also include less regular attenders.

The partnership meetings generally take the form of a series of presentations from forum members, especially council road safety officers, followed by questions, particularly from council members. It therefore appears to operate in a similar way to a council sub-committee with an element of political accountability. Councillors are seen as key members of the group.

The partnership is conducted as a forum for raising specific concerns and problems, and for seeking the Council's response.

1.3.3 Sharing information and networking
The partnership provides opportunities for networking and making contacts, as well as a mechanism for information exchange. The SNA showed that there was some confusion concerning forum membership. Two of the twelve people who were sent a questionnaire stated that they were not members of the forum. In addition, the forum leader identified one of the people to whom he had sent a questionnaire as a non-member (questionnaires were only sent to forum members). This suggests that the forum membership is not clearly defined and there is not a clear sense of who is a member and who is not. This could impede communication within the forum (including information exchange) as well as the ability to make contacts and ultimately to achieve its aims. There were many examples of information being provided to the group, including, for example, information on the setting up and activities of the regional Road Safety Partnership, progress on the development of the local Road Safety Plan, fire service activities and various road safety department EPT activities. With some exceptions, this information is largely one directional – from council road safety to other parties. It is typically disseminated more widely through partnership members to their colleagues and the community.

1.3.4 Delivering specific activities
The forum does not generally provide a mechanism for the development or delivery of road safety initiatives. One example of this happening was an agreement to seek joint council/police funding of a Community Speedwatch scheme. However, actions like this arising from the forum were not typical. Indeed, as Figure 1.1 shows, the current network structure of the forum does not appear conducive to the development or delivery of initiatives as it has a very open, weakly connected structure. Forum members are not particulalry influential on each other. This suggests that they do not know each other well and do not work together to any great extent. This makes it harder to share information and to develop and deliver any activities effectively.

1.3.5 Contribution of members
Those attending the partnership from outside the highways department appeared to feel that they had a limited role to play. They may be characterised as receivers, rather than contributors to the partnership, typically benefiting from receiving information, making contacts and requesting assistance. For some, as the meeting is infrequent, it was not regarded as onerous to attend and did not conflict with other calls on their time. However, other key partners did not attend at all and were unclear about the role and function of the group.

1.3.6 Strengths and limitations
The partnership was seen as providing some access to the council road safety department and a setting for raising concerns and issues. However, it was felt that the extent of external engagement with members was limited, a viewpoint which is supported by the SNA. It was suggested that revisiting the forum's objectives may be appropriate and ensuring that members were aware of what these were. It was also suggested that a joint working arrangement which was more involved in steering policy and delivery could be more beneficial. However, to facilitate this, the current structure of the forum would need to change. In particular, membership would need to be more clearly defined. Members would also need to build closer relationships and have a clear understanding of their role within the forum. It would be anticipated that this might occur consequentially if the agreed function of the group required it. However, it would seem more likely that significant impetus might be needed to achieve this aim given the way in which the forum currently operates.

The partnership appears to partially meet its stated objectives. It provides a mechanism for informing members about road safety plans and activities, as well as providing a forum for local interest groups to have a voice, although accountability to the group is limited. It plays a limited role in promoting joint working and joint initiatives or providing a platform for the development of such initiatives. It puts people in touch with each other (although SNA

suggests that the extent of this is limited), but initiatives are typically developed outside the forum, and often independently rather than in partnership.

1.4 Example 2: task group of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

The second example of joint working that was examined was established as a road safety theme task group set up under the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

1.4.1 Strategic context
The strategic context in this area, as recognised in the Sustainable Community Strategy, went through a review process aiming to be a document that represented all partner agencies rather than a council-led strategy on behalf of others. It was also reviewed to ensure alignment with the Local Area Agreement.

Priorities were set by an iterative process including on-line and postal consultation with residents, consultation with members, workshops and a conference. The Strategy identifies a number of separate themes, but, at the same time, aims to recognise common agenda and cross-cutting issues. As such, road safety issues are recognised in the Safer Communities Priority, **Make our roads safer for adults and children**, as well as the Children and Young People Priority, **All children and young people to feel safe at home and in their community***. The ways of achieving these priorities are identified as making the road environment safer for all road users; equipping children with the life skills to travel safely and become responsible road users; and enforcing road traffic law.

Road safety is also clearly embedded in the Local Area Agreement in this area that is part of the delivery mechanism for the Community Strategy. The development of the Local Area Agreement involved an examination of the six priority themes in the Strategy and developing the best match from the NI set to these themes. The selection process also involved achieving a balance between themes and taking account of NIs that required the involvement of several partners rather than being an individual responsibility. In this area indicator a target of reducing the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents (NI 48) has been included in the Local Area Agreement NI set.

1.4.2 Partnership structure and objectives
The task group is one of a number of delivery group themes around community safety reporting on a three monthly basis to the Community Safety Delivery Board and ultimately responsible to the high level Strategy Group represented by chief officers and lead members of the participating authorities. Although the governance of the task group is relatively formal, it does not have any separate documented objectives or terms of reference. However, its purpose became more formalised with the inclusion of casualty reduction NIs into the Local Area Agreement. This provided an overarching objective and all work is focused on reducing the numbers of people killed and seriously injured in road traffic accidents in accordance with the adopted NI. The group includes representatives from council road safety, the police, Ambulance Fire and Rescue, Play Partnership, the Safeguarding Children Board and the Primary Care Trust, and meets on a fairly regular basis. The SNA (see Figure 1.2) shows, in comparison to the forum partnership, that this group is much more tightly connected.

1.4.3 Sharing information and networking
This joint working arrangement provides networking opportunities for members and contacts so that they know who to talk to about what within the partner organisations. The SNA found that the Ambulance Fire and Rescue service representative was not well known to members of the task group. Members who needed input from Ambulance Fire and Rescue were regularly consulting with another member of Ambulance Fire and Rescue when they needed input from this service. This places the flow of information at risk and, consequently, could affect the effectiveness of the forum. The forum is also a place where information is shared and exchanged. Examples of the type of information exchanged in this setting included, for example, funding information, updated casualty figures, streets concerned about enforcement, NHS childhood injury data, relevant appointments and updates on strategy, including the Local Transport Plan and the Play Strategy. Interestingly, the SNA indicated that

individual members of the task group had developed local, regional and national links which would have facilitated the attainment of such information.

1.4.4 Delivering specific activities
The SNA (see Figure 1.2) shows that, in general, group members consider each other influential, thus promoting opportunities for co-working and co-operation and enhancing the flow of communication. The task group does provide a setting for the development of delivery activities. Examples of such co-operative activity include the establishment of a group to prepare a version of the road safety plan for community engagement, a seat-belt campaign, action on parking at schools, a car-seat project developed from reported incidences of in-car injuries rising, and the preparation of funding bids. These are often focused on areas of greatest need, which tends to be the more disadvantaged areas within the community.

It was recognised that activity development is often progressed outside of the partnership meetings, but the group provided a focus for such activity and made it easier. It was felt that, in some cases, without the partnership there would not have been the knowledge of funding or evidence-based information on which to progress the activity. It would, however, appear that these activities are restricted to a number of core members and not the wider group. The SNA showed that the local links with non-task-group members were generally shared by two or possibly three task group members. However, only single task group members had made the regional and national links which were present in the group. This may explain why these activities are restricted.

1.4.5 Contribution of members
Council road safety, the police, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the fire service are committed to the task group and see it as playing an important role in road traffic casualty reduction. It is fully aligned with the corporate strategy of each organisation, with each committed to casualty reduction targets as partnership members. The police see it as important in giving road policing and casualty reduction some priority in relation to other areas of policing activity. They lead on enforcement activities. The fire service has, since 2004, a specific obligation and commitment to working with other partners to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents. They add value through education delivery and resource, and consider this partnership arrangement an integral part of their obligation. For each of these partners it is seen as a relevant and useful joint working arrangement which they are readily able to commit to. However, in the SNA, the fire service representative was the only representative who said that they did not have sufficient time to undertake their task group activities. They were also the only task group member who was not regarded as influential by any of the other task group members, although they had been part of the task group for the past year.

Other partners, for example, neighbourhood services and play, consider it important that they are represented and have a role to play in highlighting neighbourhood issues and concerns, and in recognising the links between the environmental well-being of children and road safety. For the latter there is an historic involvement in the task group arising from previous involvement in Government-funded capital play projects which are no longer being developed. Neither partner felt that they contribute to ongoing local service delivery in the same way as other partners. It was also noted that the intelligence shared at this meeting was accessible through other forums, such as area committees.

1.4.6 Strengths and limitations
The task group appears to benefit from its formal association with the Community Safety Strategy and its clear focus on casualty reduction that is recognised in the Strategy. It is accountable to the strategy Delivery Board which gives it clarity of focus and standing. Outcomes have been positive during the period that the group has been in place, insofar as road casualties have decreased which is seen as a positive endorsement of the partnership's organisation and activities.

Overall the group is considered to play an important role in relationship building between key partners, utilising the different skills and resources of partners, and sharing information for developing activities and interventions. It is likely that this could be further exploited through

the increased engagement of partners involved in neighbourhood development and environmental schemes.

1.5 Conclusions and good practice

1.5.1 Build into strategic level planning

The analysis of the two contrasting partnership arrangements has indicated that there is merit in ensuring that the functions and objectives of local road safety partnership arrangements are recognised by and aligned with higher strategic level functions. There is a need for high-level organisational priority and commitment which will tend to give the subsidiary partnerships greater credibility and support from a wider range of partner authorities. This endorses the findings of the Audit Commission in their investigation into the prevention of unintentional injury to children (Audit Commission, 2007).

1.5.2 Data sharing to guide planning

There is an emphasis on evidence-based planning at a strategic level and the use of statistical data to guide and monitor strategy. Police road casualty data (STATS19) is widely used for monitoring purposes, not least for monitoring performance against the NIs. STATS19 data, as well as hospital injury records (health episode statistics), provide a good source of information for recognising geographic and health inequalities and guiding strategies accordingly. It is important to share, and regularly review, this information and analysis with partners for joint evidence-based planning.

1.5.3 Clarity of purpose

The partnership analysis has indicated that it is important to have a clear understanding of the terms of reference of the group, the objectives and the membership. Where the purpose is clear, and participants have a common agenda, it is apparent that progress is more likely to be made. It is also appropriate to put into place monitoring systems for measuring performance in relation to the stated objectives.

1.5.4 Leadership and championing

The recognition of road casualty reduction as a partnership activity requires individuals who take a lead in championing the issue and promoting its inclusion in different settings. This would involve, for example, using casualty data to highlight problems in specific areas or among specific groups and lobbying for recognition.

1.5.5 Utilising partner roles and skills

Who is involved in the partnership is important and it is important for each to have a good understanding of others' roles. This is something that may be more challenging where it is outside more traditional joint working arrangements and encompasses services involved with addressing health and social inequalities, and developing safe and liveable streets, particularly for children.

1.5.6 Developing good relationships

The analysis illustrates the importance of developing good relationships in partnership. This can take time and it is important that there is trust and respect between partners and the ability to work together.

1.5.7 Joint funded posts

The investigation indicates that the presence of joint funded posts is likely to have a positive impact on partnership working. This mechanism creates buy-in from the participating agencies and helps in their alignment and working together.

Figure 1.1: Forum network
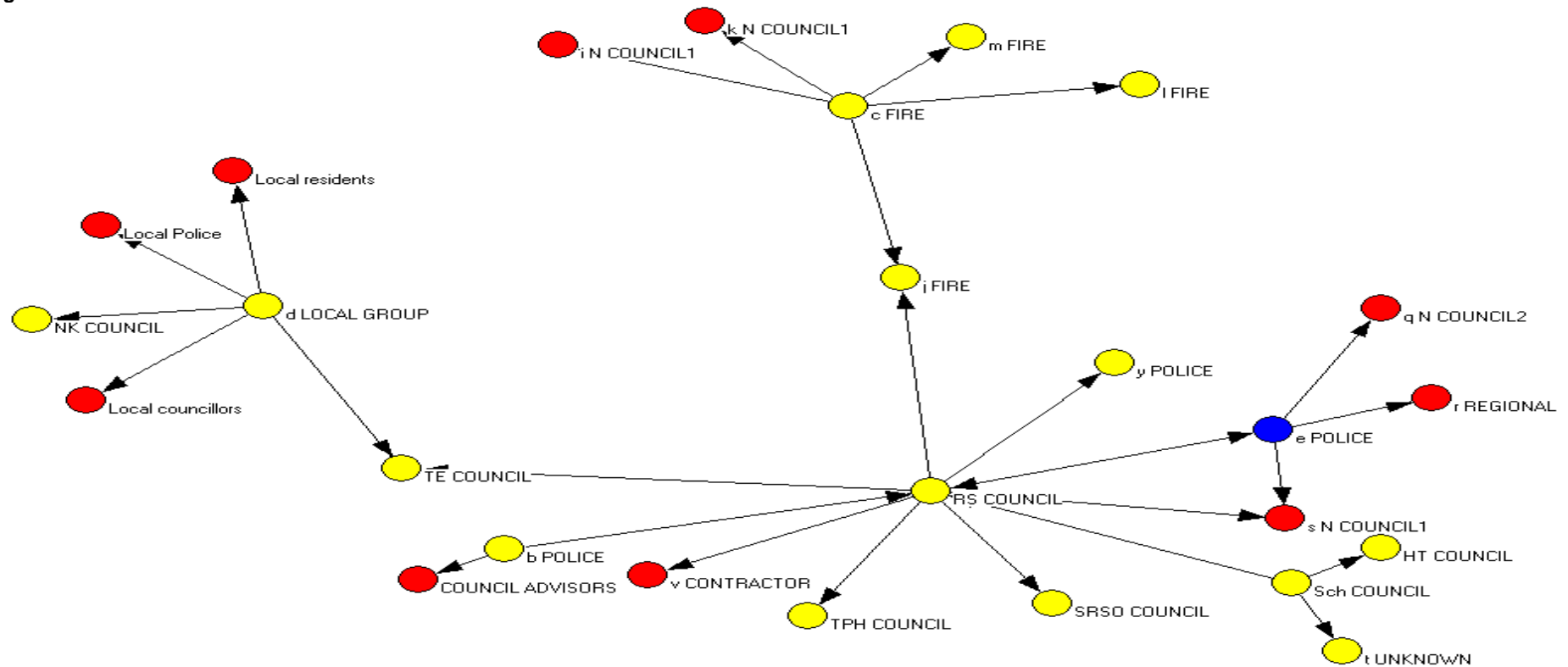
Key to council jobs/departments

HT = Head of transport	SRSO = Senior road safety officer	NK = Not known
RS = Road safety team	TE = Traffic and engineering	
Sch = Children and young people, schools	TPH = Transportation portfolio holder	

Figure 1.2: Task group network

Key to council job titles/departments

Eng = Engineer

NK = Not known

RST = Road safety team

TH = Traffic and Highways
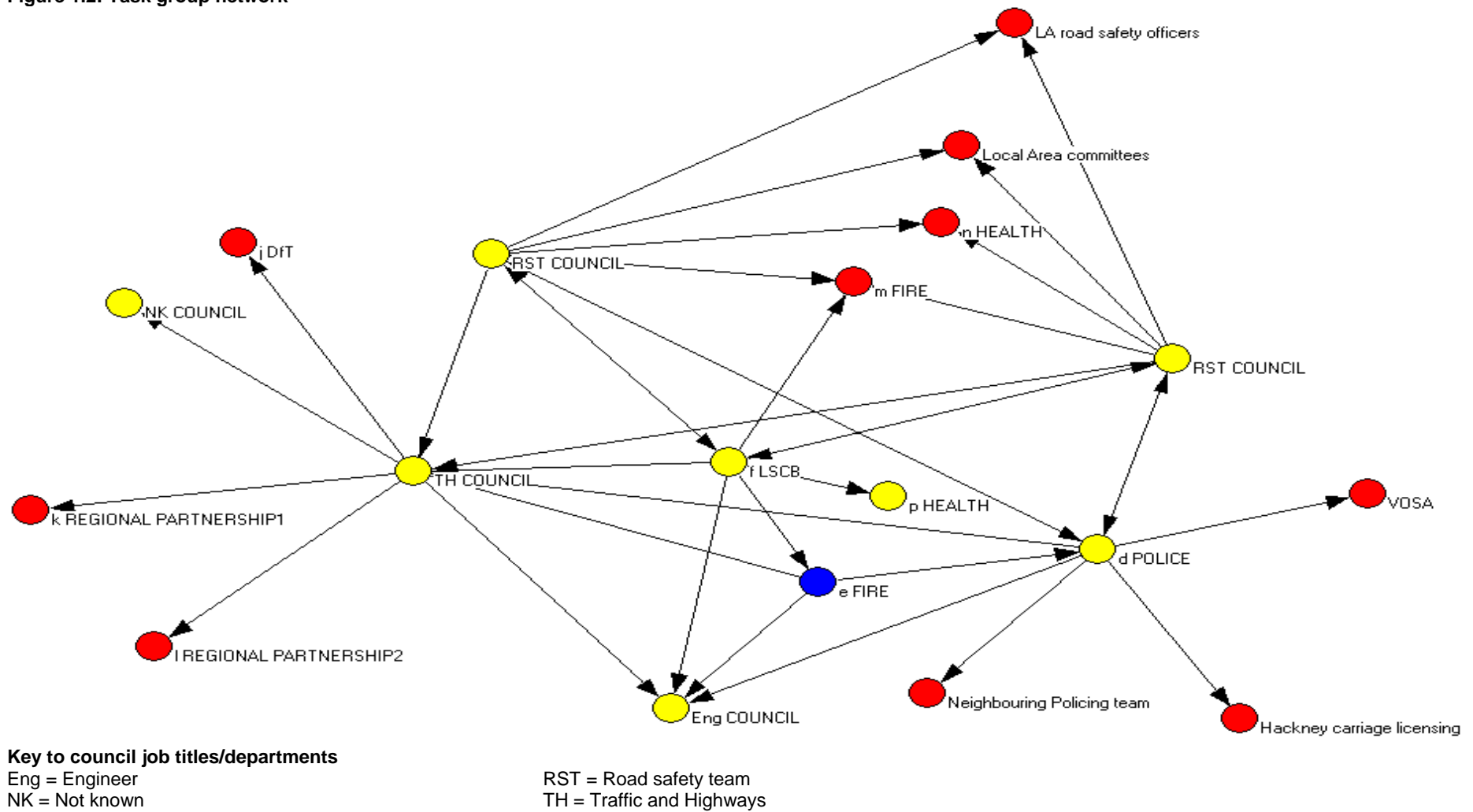
Key to Figures 1.1 and 1.2 (SNA diagrams)

🟡 = Group member
🔴 = Non-group member
🔵 = Group member who is not recognised as a group member by at least one colleague

Meaning of lines between yellow dots or yellow and blue dots

🟡 a ⟶ 🟡 b = group member a thinks group member b is influential
🟡 a ⟵ 🟡 b = group member b thinks group member a is influential
🟡 a ⟷ 🟡 b = group members a and b think each other are influential

Meaning of lines between red and yellow dots
🟡 a ⟶ 🔴 c = group member a consults regularly with non-member c

Names
As far as possible these are self-explanatory, but in Case Study 2, two neighbouring councils were consulted regularly by group members. These have been identified as NCOUNCIL1 and NCOUNCIL2.

2   References

Audit Commission (2007) *Better Safe than Sorry: Preventing Unintentional Injury to Children.* London: Audit Commission.

Department for Transport (2007) *Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone: The Second Three Year Review. The Government's Road Safety Strategy and Casualty Reduction Targets for 2010.* London: Department for Transport.